

GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY
DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Minutes of the 6th Meeting of State Level Steering Committee for Preparation of Union Territory of Puducherry Action Plan on Climate Change held on 18.06.2019 at 03.30 PM in the Chamber of the Chief Secretary for reviewing the progress of the project “Integrated Surface Water Management through Rejuvenation of 25 Tanks and 32 Village Ponds for Climate Change Adaptation in Puducherry”

The list of Officers who attended the meeting is enclosed as Annexure.

Agenda Item No. 1: Review of the progress of the project “Integrated Surface Water Management through Rejuvenation of 25 Tanks and 32 Village Ponds for Climate Change Adaptation in Puducherry”

1. The Director – DST&E made a power point presentation about progress of the works carried out in the 25 tanks and 32 ponds and the salient features of the directions dated 29.04.2019 of the Hon’ble High Court of Madras in WP No.24640 of 2017.
2. Secretary – PWD informed that a proposal has been received from PWD in terms of the High Court order, for shuffling of the Steering Committee constituted for Re-launching Tank Rehabilitation Project, Puducherry (TRPP) vide order dated 12.03.2013. It is this steering committee and composition which is referred to in para 13 of the order of Hon’ble High Court, Madras in WP 24640 of 2017. The Chairman directed the PWD to expedite the proposal for inclusion of additional members in the TRPP Steering Committee as desired by the Hon’ble Court. He suggested that an expert may be taken from IIT, Madras or Pondicherry University, who can carry out the task as desired by the High Court. This will be in addition to the heads of PPCC and Puducherry Ground Water Authority being the members of the Committee as per the order of Hon’ble Court.
3. The Chairman observed that as per the directions of the Hon’ble Court, the Committee (TRPP Committee) is required to furnish the report to Chief Secretary once in three months but no report has been received so far. TRPP steering committee members should inspect all the works and also ensure compliance of the High Court order dated 29.04.2019. Since, the number of works are not many, the CE, PWD and senior most Engineer under LAD shall also inspect each of the works to ensure the compliance. Further, the executing agencies namely, LAD / PWD shall place the progress, physical as well financial, on their websites for information of general public. They would ensure the display boards on the work sites, as ordered by the Hon’ble Court. CE, PWD promised the compliance within a week.



4. Since there was discrepancy in physical and financial achievements, reported by DSTE during the presentation and orally informed by Secretary (PWD) / CE, PWD / Commune Panchayat / LAD, the Chairman advised the executing agencies to submit statement of physical and financial progress in writing within a week after inspecting the works. The Executing Entities shall maintain proper photographic records of ponds and tanks before the commencement of work, during the construction and post the construction. The Chairman observed that the progress of work has been very slow and that the desilting has been done only on the fringes alongside the bunds. This does not help properly in serving the objective of water conservation which is to strengthen the water storage and recharging capacity.
5. The photographs of some pond works in the presentation showed that retaining walls have been constructed around pond even while the depth excavated to store the water is only superficial. It looked like laying foundation for a building. There did not seem to be any issue with regard to stability of bund. Construction of concrete retaining walls around ponds appears to be a case of excessive design and may also act as a constraint in the recharge of ground water. The committee advised that it is a better use of money in restoring and deepening a pond. Earthen bund also helps to consume the excavated soil, reducing cost and promoting water recharge. Also, it was reiterated to avoid recharge bore wells and rather focus on deepening of ponds / tanks, following the time tested approach towards water conservation. There is issue of efficacy too as the borewells will get clogged due to silt over time. More importantly, polluted water has a chance of entry into aquifer. Borewell structures also raise the cost of works significantly. The committee observed that money will be better spent from the limited availability of funds on enhancing the storage of ponds / tanks by deepening/desilting.
6. The committee stated that the contractors who failed to take up the execution of the work should be proceeded against and fresh contract may be finalised as per norms.
7. The Executing Entities may consult with the expert of IIT Madras or Geology Department of Pondicherry University regarding the suitability and efficacy of recharge wells in the context of works in question and shall ensure compliance of clear directions of the High Court that polluted water does not enter into aquifer. If the construction of bore well and retaining wall has not started, it should not be taken unless a clear recommendation from the expert is available. At this stage, the emphasis should be on desiltation and deepening the walls, adopting a time tested approach of water conservation through tanks and ponds.

8. The DGM, NABARD stated that in case of Puducherry, the approved DPR under the NAFCC scheme had to be revised in July 2018 as DPRs were prepared without factoring local condition including stagnation water / sewage water in ponds. Any further changes would again require a fresh approval from the Ministry. The Chairman said that, if any changes are required in the DPR for achieving the objectives of the project, necessary approval will be taken from the Ministry. DGM, NABARD, also informed that his staff had also expressed concern over mere peripheral desilting and construction of retaining walls. PWD/NABARD was advised to check if some experts from National Ground Water Authority (NGWA) could be associated in the review of the project.
9. The representatives from Director(DSTE) and CE, PWD informed that an amount of Rs. 9.34 crore had been indented from NABARD under II instalment based on the actual field conditions and the same will be utilised within the next half year. The Director, DST&E added that the request for release of II instalment under the NAFCC project was already submitted to NABARD. DGM, NABARD replied that the request 2nd installment is under process and eligible amount would be released at the earliest. Chairman advised the executing agencies to be all ready to speed up the pace of work and expedite utilization well before monsoon. Chairman directed the administrative department/Environment department to also closely monitor the works and expedite the pace of work.
10. The Committee observed that the contribution of DHAN Foundation in the capacity building is nebulous. It must do some tangible work and suggest ways so that local public can become an effective stakeholder in the water conservation exercise.

(Action: PWD / LAD)

Agenda Item No. 2: Approval for execution of Tree Plantation Work in Tanks through DRDA affiliated Panchayat Level Federations (PLFs).

The Committee observed that PWD has already awarded work order for Tank Components and tree plantation work is part of the contract. It was not clear from the proposal of PWD as to why this change is being suggested. PWD has to examine its implications first. If the cost to Government would go up due to proposed option, as alluded to by some members, it will amount to giving of benefit to the contractor. PWD was advised to execute the works as per the directions of the Hon'ble High Court.

(Action: PWD)

Annexure

Chaired by:

Shri. Ashwani Kumar, Chief Secretary to Government, Puducherry.

Officials from Govt. of Puducherry:

1. Smt. R. Alice Vaz, Secretary to Government (Revenue & Disaster Management, Local Administration), Puducherry.
2. Shri. H. P. S. Sran, Secretary to Government (Industries & Commerce, Transport), Puducherry.
3. Shri. Devesh Singh, Secretary to Government (Public Works), Puducherry.
4. Shri. Prashant Kumar Panda, Secretary to Government (Forests & Wildlife, Health, Power), Puducherry.
5. Er. S. Mahalingam, Chief Engineer, Public Works Department, Puducherry.
6. Shri. A.S.P.S. Raviprakash, Director, Department of Science, Technology & Environment and Project Director, DRDA, Puducherry.
7. Dr. B. Ramakichenin @ Balagandhi, Director, Department of Agriculture, Puducherry.
8. Dr. R. Sagaya Alfred, Senior Scientific Officer, DST&E, Puducherry.
9. Shri. K. Jeevadayan, EE, Irrigation Division, PWD, Puducherry.
10. Shri. D. Sathyanarayana Murthy, EE, LAD, Puducherry.
11. Shri. K. Kalamegam, Environmental Engineer, DST&E, Puducherry.

Officials from NABARD:

1. Shri. K. Venugopal, DGM, NABARD, Chennai.
2. Smt. Uma Gurumoorthy, AGM, NABARD, Chennai.
3. Smt. Shyampriya. R, Asst. Manager, NABARD, Chennai.

M/s. Dhan Foundation:

1. R. Prakash, Team Leader, M/s. Dhan Foundation